

VZCZCXYZ0002
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHTV #2513/01 3231233
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 191233Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4281
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAHQA/HQ USAF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEADWD/DA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/CNO WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 6273
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 2842
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 6880
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 7091
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 6330
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 4981
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 7187
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3951
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 2168
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 0834
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 8355
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 3360
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 7338
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 9415
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 2161
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 3207
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002513

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR X0XX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

All media quoted President Obama as saying in an interview he granted Fox News in China yesterday, "The situation in the Middle East is very difficult and I've said repeatedly and I'll say again, Israel's security is a vital national interest to the United States and we will make sure they are secure." The President was referring

to the Jerusalem Municipal Planning Committee's announcement that it would build 900 apartments in Gilo, East Jerusalem. The President added that the construction hampers U.S. peace efforts. Maariv and other media reported that the international community followed suit.

HaQaretz and other media reported that yesterday an aide to PM Benjamin Netanyahu dismissed U.S. anger at Israel's approval for the new homes in Gilo. Netanyahu's aide said the building plan was "a routine process." He said Netanyahu saw Gilo as "an integral part of Jerusalem. Construction in Gilo has taken place regularly for dozens of years and there is nothing new about the current planning and construction," the aide added. The media reported that Netanyahu seemed keen to contain the fresh dispute with Washington over settlements, ordering cabinet ministers to show restraint after the White House criticized the plan. Leading media quoted Geneva Initiative co-sponsor Yossi Beilin as saying that Netanyahu would soon announce a 10-month freeze on settlement building, in a bid to renew peace talks with the PA. Beilin was quoted as adding that he believed Netanyahu would not propose a halt in construction in Jerusalem. President Shimon Peres was quoted as saying in an interview with Israel Hayom that there can be no doubt that Gilo is under Israeli sovereignty and the current reality there cannot be changed. HaQaretz quoted Peres as saying during a meeting with French FM Bernard Kouchner in Jerusalem Israel knows that the U.S. and French positions is on Jerusalem but that only negotiations could resolve differences. The media quoted Kouchner as saying that construction in Gilo is not necessarily an obstacle to negotiations.

Maariv (Ben Caspit) reported on a budding Qgrad plan Q engineered mostly by President Peres and DM Ehud Barak, according to which the Palestinians will receive a guarantee that negotiations will conclude within a defined period of time (between a year and a half and two years) as well as a guarantee that at the end of negotiations the Palestinians will be in possession of territory equivalent to what they had prior to the Six-Day War. Israel, for its part, will receive a letter officially promising recognition of its Jewish character, thus ruling out the right of return, as well as security guarantees (demilitarization etc.) The obstacles facing this plan are many: the Palestinians are not agreeing to it and the Americans are yet to be convinced it is plausible. Maariv mentioned the Prime Minister's Bureau's response that various political initiatives are being discussed, however no decision has been made.

Yediot and other media reported that both Israel and Hamas expressed guarded optimism about yesterday's media reports of an imminent prisoner exchange between the parties. Yediot quoted Hamas as saying that Israel's refusal to release Israeli prisoners is a stumbling block to the implementation of the deal.

Major media reported that last night the IAF attacked a building in southern Gaza that was used for manufacturing munitions as well as two tunnels. This was in response to the Qassam rocket fire yesterday on the western Negev. Reports from Gaza state that three people were injured in the attack. In the rocket fire yesterday no one was injured and no damage was caused.

Major media reported on Iran's rejection of the nuclear deal.

Industry, Trade, and Labor Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer (Labor Party) was quoted as saying in an interview with Maariv that the U.S. never requested a settlement freeze from Yitzhak Rabin or Ehud Olmert.

HaQaretz quoted Kadima Knesset Member Shaul Mofaz as saying in Washington, during meetings at the State Department with Ambassador Dennis Ross and Deputy Secretary of State Jeff Feltman, that the territory of the future Palestinian state will be close to that of the territories occupied in 1967.

The Jerusalem Post and other media reported that FM Avigdor Lieberman is planning to tap veteran Israeli diplomat Alon Pinkas for the Israeli ambassadorship at the U.N. The Jerusalem Post quoted a diplomatic official familiar with Pinkas's record as saying that Pinkas has moved from the political Left to the center. Maariv reported on an initiative by right-wingers to return Jewish presence to Joseph's Tomb near Nablus. The IDF abandoned the site nine years ago during the second Intifada.

Leading media reported that yesterday two Border Policemen were arrested on suspicion of having beaten an East Jerusalem Palestinian.

The Jerusalem Post cited a new study by the NGO Sikkuy that the social, economic, health, and educational gaps between Israel's Jewish and Arab citizens are continuing to grow, mostly as a result of unfair government policies and prejudice from the Jewish population.

The media reported that the Government has authorized the purchase of a special aircraft for presidential and prime ministerial trips.

Mideast:

Block Quotes

I. QGot a Bit Carried Away, Mr. President

Conservative columnist Hanoch Daum QaddressedQ President Obama in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (11/19): QFrom here, Mr. Obama, the whole recent move concerning Gilo seems like a haphazard and tragic error, which will only further entangle things in the region. This is such a preposterous move, Mr. President, that even Tzipi Livni, chairwoman of the opposition, a woman who usually misses no opportunity to totally miss out, has understood that she must openly oppose this new demand, which regards Gilo as a settlement. But it is not only the demand that we halt our construction in Gilo -- a demand which nobody really plans on abiding by -- which is causing us to lose sleep. It is also the tone of your words. You say that if we build in Gilo, a legitimate Jerusalem neighborhood, Israel will become a less safe place to live. You explain that the construction will cause Palestinians to perform acts of extremism. You insinuate that terrorism is a direct and unavoidable result of Israeli conduct. You are telling us, essentially, that just as if you water a plant it grows, so if you build houses in Gilo, terrorists perform suicide attacks in coffee shops. A natural occurrence. So what if following our withdrawal from Gush Katif we received more rockets? So what if after pulling out of Lebanon we got served with Katyusha rockets? So what if after having offered the Palestinians everything at Camp David, we got a murderous Intifada in return? This is of less interest to you. After all, it is only our security that concerns you. Because if we only stop building in Gilo, all will be quiet here. Iran will not threaten us with nuclear weapons, Hizbullah will not seek out our detriment, and Hamas will choose to disarm itself for all eternity. A new administration comes with no understandings. This is certainly acceptable to us, Mr. President. But you would do well to understand, already early on, when your approval is at an all time low of 46 percent, that not all of your heart's desires will immediately come true here. There are some particularly preposterous demands -- and that which regards Gilo as a settlement is one of them -- which unite us, the Israelis, from right and from left and cause us to remember that at the end of the day we, and only we, hold the right to decide where we build, what we build, and what will happen within our sovereign state. America is a good friend and such it shall remain, Mr. President, even if ever so often we must put it in its place.

II. QGo for It, Abbas!

Liberal columnist Larry Derfner wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (11/19): QWhat we're seeing now in the West Bank is something the democratic world has been awaiting for a very, very long time: a non-violent Palestinian independence movement. Everything that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salaam Fayyad are threatening -- a unilateral declaration of statehood, an appeal to the UN for recognition, or, if that doesn't work, dissolving the PA and demanding Israeli citizenship for Palestinians -- are all tactics of non-violence. They're all meant to force Israel, via international pressure, to give the Palestinians what every country except this one thinks they're entitled to: a sovereign state based on the pre-Six Day War borders. Abbas, Fayyad and their people aren't blowing up buses, they're not shooting anybody -- with the notable

exception of Hamas gunmen -- and they recognize the State of Israel.

Isn't this what everyone's been asking of them?... The way things stand are that the Palestinians are delivering peace while Israel has gone back on its offer of land; who's holding up progress here, us or them? Unfortunately, the Americans and Europeans have been too timid to back up the PA, so Abbas and Fayyad are threatening unilateral, non-violent actions to embarrass the world -- which supports their demands -- into acting. In response, the prime minister and his government are raising the roof. Unilateral actions! What about the Oslo Accords, which this government has always revered? What about the U.N. resolutions, which this government salutes?.... If non-violence fails, it stands to reason that the Palestinians will return to violence. Israel can't see this, doesn't want to see it. So it's up to Obama and the West to make Israel see. What are they waiting for -- an explosion?

III. QObamaQs No Wimp

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (11/19): QObama's fury was over not only the principle, but also the way Netanyahu handled the crisis [over construction in Gilo]. In their recent White House meeting they spoke about how even disagreements should be settled in a gentlemanly fashion. White House officials wanted to believe that Netanyahu had taken to heart the message that he should never again portray the president of the United States as a wimp. The impassioned reaction to U.S. Middle East Envoy George Mitchell's request to postpone the Gilo plan outraged Obama and his staff even more than the act itself. They have enough to do with fending off the Republican ambushes, mainly on Fox, against Obama's hesitation on the war in Afghanistan. U.S. embassies in Arab countries are reporting that Obama's charms are wearing off as it becomes clear that nothing has changed since his June speech in Cairo. The Obama administration has recently begun discussing how to appease Abbas -- for example, by giving him letters spelling out U.S. support for a final-status arrangement based on the 1967 borders and reaffirming Washington's position that Jerusalem is divided into eastern and western parts. Netanyahu's behavior in the Gilo affair could remove any remaining doubt in Obama's mind over signing such letters.

IV. QFalse Alarm and Real Threat: Unilateral Events

Former Meretz leader, former Justice Minister, and chief Israeli promoter of the Geneva Initiative, Yossi Beilin, wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (11/19): Q[The Palestinians] do not want the implementation of the second stage of the Roadmap, which proposes a state within provisional borders. From this standpoint, the Israeli reaction is unnecessary and even ridiculous. However, the other possibility raised by the Palestinians -- a unilateral annulment of the Palestinian Authority -- is a practical possibility. And it is also a real threat to Israel. It is practical because the U.S. cannot veto such a move and Israel cannot prevent it: the Palestinians are entitled to announce that they did not intend to maintain an authority for such a long time and that they are returning the infant to us. Israel will have to return to managing their lives and invest billions of shekels every year to meet their daily needs. In addition, this move will greatly weaken the possibility of establishing a Palestinian state and will increase the danger of one state, in which the Jews will become a minority within a few years. If the two sides do not return to the negotiating table as soon as possible and engage, instead, in making old and new threats towards each other -- they will both pay the price. Still, they have the possibility of returning to talks. If there is another violent outburst in the near future, this will become impossible.

V. QStop Playing Make-Believes

Conservative columnist Erel Segal wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (11/19): QNo single Palestinian leader is prepared to sign a de facto concession on the right of return. On the other stances, Israeli stances are being eroded one by one. TodayQs Likud is yesterdayQs Meretz. While the erosion continues, we reach absurdities such as Gilo. Those who accepted to freeze construction in Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank] will today be blasted for building in Gilo; tomorrow theyQll be condemned for their attempts to make the Galilee more Jewish. Oh, sorry, it is no longer politically correct to talk about Judaization of the Galilee. If I

understand Obama's logic properly, it might ignite Palestinian resistance. There also are Palestinians and a demographic problem in the Galilee. The Palestinians know that patience pays. They have grasped the message of QNetzarim's fate is akin to Tel Aviv's. [Netzarim was a settlement in the Gaza Strip.] So have the [rebellious pro-settler] soldiers.

CUNNINGHAM